



New VEM Director Appointed

The Vermont Department of Public Safety Commissioner Keith Flynn today officially announced the appointment of Joe Flynn as the Director of Vermont Emergency Management (VEM). Flynn, who is no relation to Commissioner Flynn, has been the Rail Director for the Vermont Agency of Transportation since 2009. Flynn was a critical leader within VTrans' Irene emergency response operation, serving as the Commander of the VTrans Regional Response Center in Dummerston. He then served as an operations director in the Irene Recovery Office, where he is still working under the direction of newly appointed Recovery Officer, Sue Minter.

"Flynn's previous management experience on the select board in South Hero, as a deputy sheriff with Grand Isle County Sheriff's Department, and as a the retired chief of the South Hero Volunteer Fire Department, will serve Vermont well in his role as VEM director," said Commissioner Keith Flynn about Joe's recent decision to accept the position.

On being appointed as director Joe Flynn said, "I am pleased to have the opportunity to continue my work in post-Irene recovery, as well as move Vermont forward in emergency preparedness. It is an honor to accept this position and work closely with many of my colleagues in Public Safety."

Flynn will transition to the to the position in the beginning of February. The previous Director of Vermont Emergency Management, Mike O'Neil, was appointed as Executive Director of Fire Safety in December of 2011. Peter Coffey, the interim Director of Vermont Emergency Management, will remain Deputy Director of Operations and Logistics at VEM . With respect to the question of the Irene Recovery Office's plan following Joe's move to VEM, the Recovery Office will be working to replace him in the near future.

Mitigation Grant Deadlines Extended

Vermont cities and towns have extra time to submit applications for federal hazard mitigation grants. **The deadline is now February 17, 2012** (it was originally January 20th). The federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides funds to communities for the repairs or improvements that lessen the impacts of future disasters.

HMGP provides money for projects aimed at mitigating the risk for future flooding. Typical hazard mitigation projects would include: repair and mitigation of local roads and bridges, structural elevations or relocations, replacement of undersized culverts, remediation of stream bank erosion, home buyouts, and more. Project proposals need not be directly connected to flooding from the most recent disaster.

Federal funds pay for 75% of these projects, with local communities paying for 25% of the cost. Only municipalities can, and must apply in order to receive

funding; a committee assembled by Vermont Emergency Management selects projects from the pool of applicants.

Please note the following FEMA eligibility requirements:

1) Communities must have a FEMA approved and adopted local mitigation plan no later than the date that funds are awarded. Those towns lacking an approved plan should contact their local Regional Planning Commission for assistance.

2) Communities must be participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), if a special flood hazard area has been identified in the community. Please contact the Agency of Natural Resources state floodplain coordinator for additional information on applying for NFIP membership.

Continued on Last Page

\$21-MILLION COMING TO HELP VERMONTERS REBUILD

Senator Patrick Leahy, Senator Bernie Sanders, Congressman Peter Welch and Governor Peter Shumlin have announced that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is releasing \$21.6 million in community rebuilding funds to Vermont from a newly enacted appropriations bill.

This is one of the largest single releases of federal disaster relief grants to Vermont. Two features of the CDBG program make these funds especially useful: the program's flexibility enables the state to forge Vermont-specific plans for using them, and these funds can be used as a state match in leveraging help under other federal disaster recovery programs. Vermont will use the emergency funds from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to help communities rebuild homes and businesses damaged or destroyed by Tropical Storm Irene. Vermont is one of eight states receiving grants, approved by HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, which come from topped-up emergency relief funds in an annual funding bill approved by Congress and signed into law by President Obama in November. The emergency CDBG funds can be used to relieve the affordable housing shortage worsened by the storm and to help rebuild housing units, provide loans to homeowners, and help rebuild essential community facilities.

As a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and of its HUD subcommittee, Leahy was instrumental in ensuring that the disaster assistance funds were included in the final appropriations package. Leahy said, "This is a major building block in Vermont's recovery. These are funds for made-in-Vermont answers for specific needs across our state. This will enable the state to offer vital help to homeowners, to aid in repairing crucial community facilities and to rehabilitate and rebuild rental units for affordable housing. I thank Secretary Donovan for his prompt and caring work in allocating resources that will greatly help our communities and their citizens to get back on their feet."

Senator Sanders noted that "Vermont was facing a shortage of affordable housing before Irene hit, and like the rest of the country, our

state is facing the effects of the prolonged economic recession. These funds will go a long way toward repairing or replacing damaged housing, supporting economic development efforts, and creating jobs for Vermonters. This news couldn't have come at a better time."

Welch said, "Vermont has made incredible progress recovering from Tropical Storm Irene. But there are still countless Vermonters struggling to get back on their feet. These funds will pay for Vermont-specific needs and lend a helping hand to those who need it most."

"We are extremely grateful for the work of the delegation, led by Senator Leahy, to secure this funding for Vermont. We are going to put it to work rebuilding homes, businesses and communities," Governor Shumlin said. "To begin, we'll provide matching funds to cities and towns for buyouts that will help Vermonters recover their losses and move away from dangerous, flood-prone areas."

According to Recovery Officer Sue Minter and Secretary Lawrence Miller, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development will also use the funding to meet Irene-related needs identified at meetings through the Community Recovery Partnership and public hearings. "Last year's floods continue to present a huge hardship on the lives and livelihoods of Vermonters," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "These funds, will supplement other forms of disaster assistance to put these communities on the path toward long-term recovery."



Downtown Brandon post-Irene

VTrans Safe Roads Policy Explained

Like our neighboring states, Vermont adheres to a “Safe Roads at Safe Speeds” policy during storm events. Delivering “bare roads” during a storm is simply not possible. However, we are constantly working to deploy new technologies and methods to improve safety for the traveling public and efficiency in the expenditure of their tax dollars. One new initiative that has been garnering more attention lately is the use of salt brine. It’s important that the public understand what salt brine is and how it differs—or doesn’t—from conventional road salt.

Road salt is the same as the salt on the dinner table, NaCl, just bigger particles and not as clean. Salt brine is nothing more than salt and water, NaCl and H₂O. You can drop dry salt particles in a pile of snow, or mix dry salt particles with water to make salt brine – you end up with the exact same thing, salt and water. In fact, our salt brine is made with the same salt – from the same stockpiles – that we are already spreading on the highways.

At times VTrans will mix additives into dry salt or salt brine to make the salt work better at lower temperatures. We mostly use a product called *Ice B’ Gone* that is essentially water, molasses and magnesium chloride (which is just another kind of salt). *Ice B’ Gone* also makes the salt or brine sticky so it stays on the road better and has been documented by our own field testing, as well as other organizations such as the Pacific Northwest Snowfighters Association, to be less corrosive than salt. In fact, *Ice B’ Gone* is rated by the EPA as being “Designed for the Environment”.

The use of sand and chlorides has a cumulative, detrimental effect on the environment. When we allow sand and salt into our water ecosystems it doesn’t break down or disappear; it stays there until it’s removed. Since large-scale removal is not technologically or economically feasible, it behooves us to limit the amount of sand and salt entering the environment.

That is precisely the aim of the salt brine effort – it allows us to use less sand and salt while still providing a safe road for travelers. For example, in the winter of 2000-2001, total snowfall in Burlington was 122 inches. The maintenance district used 16,540 tons of salt and 9,180 cubic yards of sand to maintain the state highways within their jurisdiction. During the winter of 2010-2011, Burlington saw 128 inches of snow and that same district, using salt-brine, used about 11,000 tons of salt and just 7 cubic yards of sand. The savings of 5,540 tons

of salt and 9,170 cubic yards of sand is due – at least in part – to the use of salt brine and salt brine blends. VTrans is confident that continued research, training and experience, will assist in the achievement of even greater savings without sacrificing safety.

Some have expressed concern that salt brine is somehow harder on cars than conventional road salt. Salt brine is the same chemical composition as dry salt mixed with ice, snow or rain. Less salt used translates into less corrosion potential regardless of whether it is dry salt or wet salt (brine). Studies have shown that the additive blends we use actually lower the corrosive properties of salt. The Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine also tackled this question. They came to the conclusion that the total number of chlorides in the environment has a much stronger influence on metal corrosion than the type of chloride-based deicer or the method of application. While there may be individuals who speculate that salt brine is more corrosive to vehicles, the science and studies to date have not shown this to be true.

Our goal is to perform winter maintenance activities in the most safe, cost effective, and environmentally friendly manner possible, and we believe salt brine is one of the tools which will allow us to do just that. But no matter what combination of tools and methods we employ in our effort to manage road conditions, public safety on our highways still depends largely on the behavior of individual drivers and the collective willingness to slow down when conditions warrant it. In the end, the safety of everyone on the road depends on the choices you make.

By Scott Rogers, Director of Operations for the Vermont Agency of Transportation



MITIGATION—CONTINUED

Due to the size of the Irene disaster, at least \$16-million dollars will be allocated to Vermont communities for mitigation projects. Funds allocated through HMGP are independent of FEMA Public Assistance grants so every city or town in Vermont is eligible for mitigation funds under this program.

Due to the size and scope of repairs and cleanup following Irene municipalities are being given extra time to apply for HMGP grants. **The new deadline is now February 17, 2012.**

Communities may download an HMGP application from VEM's website at <http://vem.vermont.gov>. For more information, communities can contact Ray Doherty at Vermont Emergency Management at 800-347-0488 or rdoherty@dps.state.vt.us



A past mitigation project from the town of Lincoln. The town stabilized a stream bank to minimize flood risk.
Vermont Emergency Management Photo

VEM Publications Available

The 2012 Vermont Emergency Management calendar is currently available to anyone who would like one. The calendar was delayed slightly this year due to a number of factors – not the least of which was Tropical Storm Irene. The calendar is dedicated to photos taken by local responders and community members during that storm, and includes tips on how to stay safe during future disasters. The calendar is free and can be requested at the address below.

VEM also continues to offer its Family Preparedness Workbook free of charge. That publication contains more in-depth steps people can take to prepare for and respond to a disaster. The workbook hits on topics from preparedness kits, to formulating an emergency plan, to caring for animals during a disaster. Communities can request multiple copies of the workbook for distribution at municipal offices or during town meetings.

For either publication please contact Vermont Emergency Management at 800-347-0488 or e-mail mbosma@dps.state.vt.us.

